

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) A vegetable article which has been subjected to a crosslinking reaction by using a crosslinking agent so as to inhibit worsening in initial characteristics thereof.

2. (Original) A process for producing a vegetable article, comprising:  
subjecting the vegetable article to a crosslinking reaction by using a crosslinking agent so as to inhibit worsening in initial characteristics thereof.

3. (Original) A vegetable article which has been subjected to a crosslinking reaction by using a crosslinking agent, wherein a moisture content change index after washing and dehydration according to JIS L 0217 103 method defined by the following equation is 0.9 or less.

Moisture content change index =  $A/B$

A: Moisture content after one-time washing of crosslinked vegetable article

B: Moisture content after one-time washing of uncrosslinked vegetable article

4. (Original) A vegetable article which has been subjected to a crosslinking reaction by using a crosslinking agent, wherein a bulk density change index before washing and after washing and drying according to JIS L 0127 103 method defined by the following equation is 0.7 or less.

Bulk density change index =  $\{(C1 - C0)/C0\}/\{(D1 - D0)/D0\}$

C0: Bulk density before washing of crosslinked vegetable article

C1: Bulk density after one-time washing of crosslinked vegetable article

D0: Bulk density before washing of uncrosslinked vegetable article

D1: Bulk density after one-time washing of uncrosslinked vegetable article

5. (Original) A vegetable article which has been subjected to a crosslinking reaction by using a crosslinking agent, wherein a lightness (L\*) change index before washing and after washing according to JIS L 0217 103 method defined by the following equation is 0.7 or less.

Lightness change index =  $\{(E1 - E0)/E0\} / \{(F1 - F0)/F0\}$

E0: L\* before washing of crosslinked vegetable article

E1: L\* after one-time washing of crosslinked vegetable article

F0: L\* before washing of uncrosslinked vegetable article

F1: L\* after one-time washing of uncrosslinked vegetable article

6. (Currently Amended) The vegetable article according to claim 3 ~~or 4~~, which comprises a fiber aggregate except for a fruit or a husk and a peel of the fruit and a general-use natural cellulose fiber.

7. (Currently Amended) The vegetable article according to claim 4 ~~3 or 5~~, which comprises ~~one kind or plural kinds selected from a leaf, a stem, a trunk and a root of a plant~~ a fiber aggregate except for a fruit or a husk and a peel of the fruit and a general-use natural cellulose fiber.

8. (Currently Amended) ~~A product comprising the~~ The vegetable article according to claim 3, 4 or any one of claims 3 to 7 ~~which comprises one kind or plural kinds selected from a leaf, a stem, a trunk and a root of a plant.~~

9. (New) The vegetable article according to claim 5, which comprises one kind or plural kinds selected from a leaf, a stem, a trunk and a root of a plant.

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10. (New) A product comprising the vegetable article according to claim 1.